

# The Influence of Javanese Cultural Internalization on the Happiness of the Elderly

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# The Influence of Javanese Cultural Internalization on the Happiness of the Elderly

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**Abstract.** Happiness of elderly could be influenced by cultural values that have been applied for generations. A cultural value strongly held by most Indonesian people, particularly the elderly, is the value of Javanese culture. The Javanese cultural values attached up to now is the principle of harmony, respect and *nrina* (acceptance of the existing situation). This study using quantitative method, attempt to comprehend the influence of Javanese cultural internalization on the happiness factor of the elderly. Subjects were 151 Javanese elderly, aged between 55 and 86 year, living in the region of Malang. The measurement procedure used the happiness-scales of 12 items from Seligman with the happiness aspects, such as engagement, pleasure and meaning. Another implemented scale was the Javanese cultural values developed by Karmiyati (26 items) with some aspects of Javanese cultures, such as harmonious, respectful and *nrina* (acceptance of the existing situation). Research analysis used simple linear regression technique. The study result showed that there was an influence of Javanese cultural values on the elderly's happiness ( $F=258.876$ ;  $Sig.000$ ). The influence of Javanese cultural values on elderly happiness was 63.5%.

**Keywords:** Elderly, Happiness, Javanese Cultural Values.

## INTRODUCTION

Happiness is defined as a special condition, with the characteristics of having the spirit of life and the ability to adjust with the various conditions in themselves and the environment. Happiness is needed by the elderly, if the happiness aspect in the elderly could not be reached, it will potentially affect various psychological problems, such as dissatisfaction and despair in life. This led to a decline in life expectancy and integrity in the elderly due to the feelings of insignificance in self-esteem and life (decreased self-esteem). This could also be accompanied by declining in the state of health, having negative social perspective and lacking of activities and emotional instability.

The principles of happiness according to Seligman (2004) refers to aspects: (1) Pleasure, which means humans always try to increase the positive emotions associated with their past, present and future life; (2) Engagement, engaging in fun activities that make a person feel happy; (3) Meaning, a goal in one's life causing a person survive and understand the value of their life. These happiness aspects will support the older people to experience happiness on their old age.

The elderly associated with culture becomes very interesting topic to study. Culture as a determinant of human behaviour commonly acknowledged can be proven through empirical studies. Culture is the entire way of life passed down from generation to generation in the forms of ritual, traditions, inheritance, and behaviour [1].

Conducted their research on Chinese society in Taiwan elaborated that cultural values could be an essential concept in determining happiness [2]. The study, furthermore, highlighted that Chinese culture applies the Yin and Yang principles to balance their life. Wu [3] formulated happiness in eastern cultural concepts is (a) material adequacy; (2) physical health; (3) noble mind and peace of life; and (4) the absence of anxiety about death. Concept formulated by Wu (in Lu, 2001) refers to the *confucian* culture of Chinese society strongly hold as their life guidance.

Research conducted by [4] in the Chinese context found that the elderly happiness in China was largely determined by their proximity to their grandchildren. Those who live with grandchildren showed a higher level of happiness. Study found that the elderly happiness in Hong Kong and Beijing influenced by social support and social networks owned or perceived by the elderly [5]. The Beijing elderly is happier and has a wider social network than the elderly in Hong Kong.

Happiness through the internalization of Javanese cultural values is applicable in eastern culture as well as Indonesian society. Indonesia as an archipelagic country with a huge variety of cultures also still applies the cultural values in everyday life. Some of Javanese cultural values, typical and still executed, are the life principles on harmony, respect, and acceptance of existing situation (*nrina*). The elderly as part of Indonesian community applying those principles might contribute to having more peaceful and happy life.

There are two basic principles in the social life of Javanese society, namely avoiding open confrontation on every situation and respecting for others [6]. These two principles are reflected in every form of Javanese interaction. It is embedded in Javanese society since they were child, so it was well internalized. The principle of avoiding conflict is reflected in the attitude of harmony. The expression of the harmony could make them feel aligned, calm and peaceful, without quarrels and hostility and they are united to help each other.

The second principle is respect. Behaviour and speech must show respect [6]. Furthermore, it is highlighted that each interaction has to show mutual respect both in language and body language and in accordance with the social level. Another principle is related to the acceptance of destiny or fate. (*Nrima*) is a belief about destiny that human life is completely under control by God, and no one can escape it. Everyone already has his destiny, so it is crucial to happily accept his destiny.

Cultural values in Javanese society adopted by the elderly become interesting to examine because these principles are a repertoire of Indonesian cultural distinctiveness and still continue to be performed up to now. Research related to the internalization of Javanese culture in improving the happiness on elderly with peculiarities in Indonesia is rarely conducted and interesting to do, as similar studies on eastern cultures were mostly carried out in China, Japan, and Korea. Thus, the researcher was highly interested in see how the internalization of Javanese cultural values in particular harmony, respect, and *nrima* could contribute to the happiness of the elderly. Objective of this research was to know whether there was an influence between Javanese cultural values and the happiness of elderly.

## METHOD

This is quantitative research study using survey through questionnaire to gain data. [7] explained survey was conducted to assess individual thoughts, opinions, and feelings. Quantitative method was used to obtain the influence of the existing variables, such as Javanese culture values and happiness in elderly.

Sampling technique was purposive sampling, with the total subjects of 151 older people in Malang Region with criteria: (1) the age of 55-86 years; (2) men and women; (3) having a Javanese cultural background; (4) physically and mentally healthy.

Research procedure was conducted by distributing the questionnaires to the elderly. Then participants were asked to choose the appropriate answer based on their personal circumstances, reflected into the existing statements. Questionnaires are Happiness Scale and Javanese Cultural Values Scale. Both measuring tools measured the level of validity and reliability.

The Happiness Scale is taken from the Happiness Orientation tool of [8] with aspects of engagement, pleasure, and meaning.

**Table 1: Description of Demographics Data of Research Subject**

Description	N	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	56	37.1
Female	95	62.9
<b>Latest Education</b>		
SD (Primary School)	73	48.3
SMP (Junior High School)	36	23.8
SMA (Senior High School)	27	17.9
Diploma	2	1.3
S1 (Bachelor's Degree)	10	6.6
S2 (Master's Degree)	3	2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	112	74.2
Widow/Widower	38	25.1
Divorced	1	0.7

The Happiness Orientation Scale was modified into the Likert model with four response options: Very Match (SS); Appropriate (S); Less Match (KS); and Not Match (TS). Initial items, 18 items in total, were translated into Indonesian language. After trying-out, there are 12 valid items. Reliability number 0.853 and coefficient corrected item total correlation were between 0.302 up to 0.767.

Javanese Cultural Values Scale was taken from research by [6] with aspects of harmony, respect and *nrima*. The Scale was formed into the Likert scale with four response options, such as: Very Appropriate (SS); Appropriate (S); Less Match (KS); and Not Match (TS). Total items were 26 items. Reliability value was about 0.957 and corrected correlation coefficient and total correlation were between 0.217 and to 0.906.

Furthermore, the data analysis testing was to determine the influence of variables, the Javanese cultural values on happiness of elderly. Data analysis technique was simple linear regression proceed through SPSS.

## RESULT

Prior to the result analysis using a simple linear regression, normality test was conducted, using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. It is known that the significance value of K-S is 0.364 (Sig. > 0.05). It could be concluded that the data had been normally distributed.

In general, the simple linear equation formula is  $Y = a + bX$ . Meanwhile, to know the value of regression coefficient obtained from constant value of unstandardized coefficients (a) was about 12,517. This number is a constant number which means that if there is no Javanese cultural values (X) and the consistent value of happiness (Y) in the elderly was 12,517. While regression coefficient number was 0.272. This number means in each addition of 1% of Javanese cultural values (X), the happiness (Y) of elderly will increase by 0.272. So, it can be concluded the regression equation was  $Y = 12.517 + 0.272X$ .



Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Result

Variables	Regression Coefficients	t	Sig.
Constant	12.517		
Javanese Values (X)	0.272	16.090	0.000
F = 258.87	Sig.0.000		
R <sup>2</sup> = 0.635			

Happiness	Javanese Cultural Values		
	High	Moderate	Low
Happy	21.19%	3.97%	0%
Happy Enough	29.80%	13.90%	14.57%
Less Happy	0%	0.66%	15.89%

Hypothesis testing showed that Sig. 0.000 < 0.05, implying that there was an influence of Javanese cultural values to the happiness of elderly (F = 258.876; Sig 0.000). Scale of the influence variables of Javanese cultural values to the happiness of elderly was 63.5%.

## DISCUSSION

The results showed that there was an influence of Javanese cultural values on happiness in elderly in Malang Region. It could be concluded that the cultural values that Javanese society still performs could become a strong foundation of the elderly to be able to feel happiness. This was in line with research conducted [2] who carried out the research on elderly in Taiwan. It was investigating *confucian* cultural values as an essential concept in determining the happiness of the elderly.

Culture is the whole way of life passed down from generation to generation in the forms of ritual, tradition, inheritance, and behaviour [1]. Although the technological development and the inclusion of western culture are undeniably entering Indonesia, cultural values are still passed down and performed from generation to generation and rooted in the daily life of society, particularly the elderly.

High respect and appreciation to the elderly in Eastern Society, such as Japan, China, India, and Indonesia, would determine how people view the happiness of elderly in the community. India, for example, is very closely related to the values of Hinduism; considers that the older people have entered the fourth stage of his life. At this stage human being completely renounce worldliness, including home ownership, wealth, and family. They are free to keep seeking the harmony between themselves and the universe. Although not everyone is able or willing to reach this fourth stage, but the stages in life are used as the path to happiness. In this situation, it is most likely activities to interact with others become less important, let alone performing activities, productive in the concept of western culture. In western culture productivity is related to the material outcomes that a person can gain

through work activities, and beneficial to oneself and others [9].

Javanese cultural values are not the only determinant on elderly happiness, the effect was about 63.5%. There were 36.5% other factors that also dictating the happiness of the elderly. These factors encompass health status, personality, emotional management, level of religiosity, social supported activity and family circumstances.

In addition, according to Suseno [6] nowadays, the application of cultural values has performed changes in various forms of expression. This form of expression change is assumed to be affected by the influences of the Javanese environment. In small towns in Java, was close to the central Javanese culture, these cultural values are still more adhered into the elderly's life compared to their counterparts, living in the big cities. This is because big cities are more flexible to acculturate various different cultures than small towns. In addition, big cities are also a centre of heterogeneous community activities, particularly activities related to economic and educational sectors. Cultural values are therefore not the only determinant of elderly happiness.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the examination of Javanese cultural values influences on the happiness of elderly, there was a significant influence between the variables as mentioned above. Happiness in elderly is considered extremely important because it is going to lead elderly to the meaningful life and be the determinant of success factors in elderly.

Recommendations based on this study are: (1) there is little research on the correlation between Javanese cultural values and the elderly conducted in Indonesia, so hopefully there will be more other studies emphasizing on this topic with more varied variables; (2) The research was conducted in Malang City, so the outcomes might only be applicable in Malang City context. For further studies, it is suggested to carry out the selection of wider research locations, so that the outcomes will be more significant for broader area coverage; (3) Cultural values are not the only determinants of happiness in the elderly, so further research related to elderly happiness can involve some more variables, such as: activity, childhood devotion, religiosity, and emotional control; (4) The next research can explore happiness from different cultures and different values.

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